171. Defects in the Public Service.

MR. K. N. MADHAVAN KARTA (*Member, Shertallai taluk, Group II*) spoke of the defects in the present system of recruitment to the public service and made some suggestions for remedying them. Till lately there was in the country complete fraternity between the various communities. What with the conduct of the Government and their officers and what with the policy adopted in the matter of patronage, that cordiality was on the wane. There was a growing impression that appointments were made on communal grounds. The Member referred to memorials that were being circulated among the Members for signature, one recommending the appointment of Mr. Taliat as Judge of the High Court, another of Mr. Pathrose Mathai, a third of Mr. Kuttalalingom Pillai to the same office, and a fourth for nominating Mr. Tampuranthozha Pillai to the Board of Education, each urging his respective candidate on the ground of his belonging to a particular community. The tension between the communities was growing so strong that one felt that talukwar segregation of communities would be the only solution. Communal animosity tended to warp the sense of justice of officers. Some departmental heads proclaim that their orders are to appoint Christians. By mutual understanding, a regular system of appointing the relations and dependants of brother officers has been growing up. A native of Shertallai was a Tahsildar. He and his wife were brutally murdered in their house and his children are given a mere pittance as pension. Police Inspector Mr. Philip was recently murdered one night at a place where he had no legitimate business. Funds were collected for the endowment of his widow and children and the Government granted them a pension even higher than his pay. Dead or alive, the Christian had an obvious advantage. The development of communal ill-feeling might lead to disastrous results and it was incumbent on the Government to prevent its growth. Representation in the public service should be according to taluks, all applications being registered in the Huzur and recruitment centralised there. The Member said he was preparing a list of appointments made in the various departments during the last five years and hoped to submit it to the Government shortly. High officers were well paid. The attention of the Government should be directed towards improving the deplorable condition of the low-paid subordinates. There was no harm if the offices were to be distributed according to population, revenue, etc., of each taluk. Shertallai did not care whether a Trivandrum Nair or a Tiruvalla Christian was appointed, but would be grateful if a Shertallai man got a job. Though there were men in Shertallai, Christians and Nairs, who were fit even to adorn the High Court Bench, no one from that taluk has yet been taken. Officers had a tendency to ascribe their failure by reference to the communal feelings. Confidence in the officers would thereby decline. Character and efficiency should remain the primary considerations in making appointments. Officers cannot systematically suppress or trample down the people in any country.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Madhavan Karta, like a very skilled physician you have diagnosed the disease perfectly correctly. But when *you* prescribe the remedy, you want *me* to administer it. As far as I can make out, you tell me that I should stop it. If I can stop it by a Government order to-morrow, I would do so without a moment's hesitation. But I am afraid, it is not a Government order that will stop it; and my prescription is the very, very, old prescription of brotherliness and neighbourly love.

172. Recruitment to the Public Service.

MR. P. A. ABRAHAM (*Member, Kottayam taluk, Group I*) observed that different methods had been suggested by different Members to regulate recruitment to the public service. The Member disclaimed to hold any brief for the community to which by accident he belonged and which could not boast of many appointments to its credit. He should feel as members of a commonwealth inspired by the common ideal of a good administration and infused with a desire for co-operation with the several heads of departments and the head of the administration. The infirmities of mankind were shared by officials who too were human beings. The remarks which had been made personally against certain officers were to be deprecated. There was, no doubt, a good deal of chronic unrest regarding public service. Comments on public service were the common feature of

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local newspapers, and caste-war and year-war statements of appointments were often called for by Members of the Legislative Council.

The first factor connected with this question was the problem of unemployment among the educated classes who were disappointed in their hopes of getting appointments. The Government had no unlimited storehouse of jobs for distribution to all aspirants. Annually, enormous sums were being spent by the people and the Government on education, but the system of education aggravated the evil instead of solving the problem of unemployment. There was unemployment at the Bar and proposals had been made by Bar Associations for increased representation in the judiciary and magistracy. The argument that members of the Bar were ignorant of revenue matters and that the separation of the judicial and executive functions should precede more generous recruitment from among vakils was not quite tenable. Some judges of the High Court have expressed the opinion that their revision work would be lightened by greater recruitment from the Bar.

Secondly, an unhealthy journalism in the country had fostered the spirit of criticising every appointment made, while healthy journalism would be a beneficial influence. More harm than good was done by irresponsible journalism. New newspapers were brought into existence almost daily to champion one particular community or faction or person, and papers grew up like mushrooms. They all claimed to be public organs, though few really represented public opinion. Journalism had latterly run into communal channels. Though not advocating the enactment of a press law or the adoption of repressive measures, the Member wished that the State should foster healthy journalism in the wider interests of the State and ignore communal programmes.

Thirdly, there was no regular standard in making appointments. The creation of a Travancore Civil Service Examination, which the Member advocated ten years ago, would avoid much criticism. It would also bring about a graded classification of officers and help to remove the anomalies and inequalities of opportunities as amongst the officers themselves. The appointments in the higher grades in the non-technical departments could be organised into one comprehensive service. Competitive examinations should be held for admission to the *cadre*, and to prevent appointments being monopolised by the intellectually advanced communities to the total exclusion of the educationally backward and depressed classes, some places must be reserved for the latter to be filled in by nomination or selection without at the same time sacrificing efficiency. The various tests introduced during the late administration related only to appointments in the subordinate service. The late Dewan had told the Member that he had laid the foundations for the organisation of a Civil Service *cadre*, and the Member wished that the Dewan would look into the matter. The blame now laid on the Government can then be shifted to the shoulders of the Examination Board.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Abraham, I have been very pleased to listen to some constructive suggestions from you. You say the line of least resistance would be to have some automatic arrangement of mechanical selection. That would be perfectly easy whether you call it staff selection board or competitive examination. But institutions like that have neither a soul to save nor a body to kick. They will work without understanding the sentiments and needs of the people. These are factors which we must try to arrange for in recruitment. How that is going to be arranged, I do not know. For the moment, I am keeping it in my own hands not with complete success. Far from it. But I can assure you that it is very close to me and is earnestly being considered how we can arrange some method of unprejudiced, fair-minded, equitable selection.

173. Representation in the Public Service.

MR. CHACKO JOSEPH (*Member, Changanachery taluk, Group II*) said that the several communities in Travancore were from ancient days living in perfect amity and as a result the State was prosperous. But in recent times there has come about a cleavage. This was due to the policy of the Government in regard to appointments to the public service. Every one in the State was entitled to a place in the service as a birthright. This should be the basic principle underlying

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